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NEW PHONETIC SYSTEM DRAFTED BY CHINESE LANGUAGE REFORM COMMITTEE

The Peiping daily Jen-min Jih-pao on 12 February 1956 published a draft plan for a new Chinese phonetic system, together with a lengthy explanation of its salient features and historical development. Both the plan and explanation were drawn up by the Commission for the Reform of Chinese Written Characters. The text of the draft plan is included below.

According to the explanation, the new Chinese alphabet uses all the letters in the Latin alphabet (except V), the letter q from the Cyrillic, and g and n from the International Phonetic Alphabet. However, the pronunciation of some of these letters is modified to accommodate Chinese speech elements. In addition, there are two new symbols, namely, j and w. When all these letters are combined into one alphabet, it is not to be considered another foreign alphabet, but the Chinese alphabet, the article said.

The article explains that syllables are joined (without hyphens) to form words. An apostrophe is used to show division between syllables when such indication is necessary to avoid ambiguity. The article said that to avoid excessive use of apostrophes, the commission adopted the consonants j and w to denote the often occurring initial sounds which are heard in such syllabic types as 技 and 居 (Wade romanization: i and wu), respectively. (The syllabic types referred to here are specifically the ones which have the same pronunciations as the sounds listed in the draft plan, Article 2, under Groups 2 and 3. By using j and w as directed in the draft plan, no syllable will begin with i or u.)

The article further explains that the small-capital i (i) is to be used only with the Chinese letters j, g, x, r, z, c, and s as the final sounds in the syllables represented by the National Phonetic Symbols ㄓ, ㄔ, ㄕ, ㄖ, ㄗ, ㄘ, ㄙ, ㄓ, ㄔ, and ㄕ. (i in the Chinese phonetic system corresponds with the finals, -ih, and -ü, in the Wade romanization of the syllabic types, chih, ch'ih, shih, jih, tsü, tz'ü, and ssü.)

Citing the possible uses of the draft plan, the article noted that the system can be used in lexicons, textbooks, popular reading matter, road signs, etc. to show the correct Peiping pronunciation of Chinese characters, especially the less familiar characters. It also provides a key to pronunciation for those who do not know many characters so that they will be able to read books and journals published in the phonetic symbols, or in Chinese characters with corresponding phonetic symbols. The new phonetic system can be used conveniently in telegraphy, flag-signaling, cataloguing, indexing, etc., and as a tool in teaching the standard dialect. The draft plan provides a basic set of letters for phonetic systems of minority nationality languages. It will pave the way for the final phoneticizing of the Chinese language.

CHINESE PHONETIC SYSTEM (DRAFT PLAN)

Issued February 1956 by the Commission for the Reform of
Chinese Written Characters

Article 1. The Chinese Phonetic System uses an alphabet to spell out words in the Peiping dialect, which has been made the standard spoken language. The 30 letters in the Chinese alphabet with their respective equivalents in the National Phonetic System and a Chinese character containing the speech sound represented by each letter are as follows. [Comment: The corresponding letters in the Wade system, as given in R. H. Matthew's Chinese-English Dictionary, have been added.]

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Section 1. The 24 Consonants

<u>Chinese Alphabet</u>	<u>Wade System</u>	<u>National Phonetic System</u>	<u>Chinese Characters*</u>
b	p	ㄅ	玻
p	p'	ㄆ	坡
m	m	ㄇ	模
f	f	ㄈ	佛
d	t	ㄉ	德
t	t'	ㄊ	特
n	n	ㄋ	訥
l	l	ㄌ	肋
g	k	ㄍ	哥
k	k'	ㄎ	科
ŋ	ng	ㄋ	額
h	h	ㄏ	喝
q	ch	ㄑ	基
q	ch'	ㄑ	欺
x	hs	ㄒ	希
ʒ	ch	ㄗ	知
ʒ	ch'	ㄗ	痴
ʃ	sh	ㄕ	詩
r	j	ㄖ	日
z	ts	ㄗ	資
c	tz'	ㄘ	雌
s	ss	ㄘ	私
j	y	ㄣ	移
w	w	ㄨ	吳

(IN
SHANGHAI
DIALECT)

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Section 2. The Six Vowels

<u>Chinese Alphabet</u>	<u>Wade System</u>	<u>National Phonetic System</u>	<u>Chinese Characters**</u>
a	a	ㄚ	啊
o	o	ㄛ	喔
e	ê [with initial]	ㄜ	額
i	i	ㄝ	衣
u	u [with initial]	ㄨ	烏
y	ü [with initial]	ㄩ	迂

Consonants may be combined with vowels to form words such as "baba" (爸爸), "mama" (媽媽), "gege" (哥哥), and "didi" (弟弟) [meaning papa, mama, elder brother, and younger brother, respectively.]

Article 2. A vowel may be followed by another vowel, vowels, and/or a consonant to spell out the following sounds:

	<u>Chinese Phonetic System</u>	<u>Wade System</u>	<u>National Phonetic System</u>	<u>Chinese Characters**</u>
Group 1. a:	ai	ai	ㄞ	哀
	au	ao	ㄠ	熬
	an	an	ㄢ	安
	ang	ang	ㄤ	肮
o:	ou	ou	ㄡ	歐
e:	ei	ei	ㄟ	欸
	en	en	ㄣ	恩
	eng	eng	ㄥ	鞏
Group 2. i:	ia	ia	ㄩㄞ	呀
	ie	ieh	ㄩㄝ	噠
	iau	iao	ㄩㄠ	腰
	iu	iou	ㄩㄡ	憂
	ian	ien	ㄩㄢ	烟
	in	in	ㄩㄣ	因
	iang	iang	ㄩㄤ	央
	ing	ing	ㄩㄥ	英

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	Chinese Phonetic System	Wade System	National Phonetic System	Chinese Characters**
Group 3. u:	ua	ua	xY	娃
	uo	uo	XZ	窝
	uai	uai	Xɿ	歪
	ui	ui	X\	威
	uan	uan	Xɿ	弯
	un	un	Xɿ	温
	uaŋ	uang	Xɿ	汪
	uŋ	ung	Xɿ	翁
Group 4. y:	ye	üeh	Xɿ	约
	yan	üan	ɿɿ	冤
	yn	un	ɿɿ	晕
	yŋ	iung	Xɿ	甬

These sounds may be preceded by consonants to spell syllables. (A syllable is equivalent to a Chinese character.) Examples are:

kai 开 pou 剖 Sen 生 qie 解 hui 会 xye 学
kaihui 开会 qiepou 解剖 xyeSen 学生

Each of the sounds in Groups 1 and 4 may spell a syllable without prefixing a consonant. For example:

ai 爱 en 恩 ou 藕 yan 远
airen 爱人 enhui 恩惠 oufen 藕粉 ynyan 永远

Syllables which are pronounced like the sounds in Groups 2 and 3 (those beginning with i and u) without prefixed consonants should be written [with j] to replace or precede the first i and w to replace or precede the first u] as follows:

	Chinese Phonetic System	Wade System	National Phonetic System
Group 2. i:	ji	i	i
	ja	ya	iY
	je	yeh	iɿ
	jau	yao	iɿ
	ju	yu	iɿ
	jan	yen	iɿ
	jin	yin	iɿ

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	Chinese Phonetic System	Wade System	National Phonetic System
Group 3. u:	jan	yang	ㄢ
	jīn	ying	ㄣ
	wu	wu	ㄨ
	wa	wa	ㄨㄚ
	wo	wo	ㄨㄛ
	wai	wai	ㄨㄞ
	wei	wei	ㄨㄟ
	wan	wan	ㄨㄢ
	wen	wen	ㄨㄣ
	wan	wang	ㄨㄢ
	wen	weng	ㄨㄣ
Examples: jīwú 义务 jéwán 夜晚 wénjī 文艺			

Article 3. The National Phonetic Symbol, 儿 (used to denote the syllabic type represented by the Chinese character 兒) [Wade romanization: erh], shall be spelled er, except when used at the end of a syllable, when it shall be spelled with just an r. For example:

ertun 兒童 erduo 耳朵 huar 花儿

Article 4. The seven syllabic types, ㄘ, ㄑ, ㄒ, ㄓ, ㄔ, ㄕ, and ㄖ, [Wade romanizations: chih, ch'ih, shih, jih, tsü, tz'ü, and ssü], shall be spelled as ㄘ, ㄑ, ㄒ, ㄓ, ㄔ, ㄕ, and ㄖ, respectively. (ㄖ is a small-capital i.)

Examples: ㄓㄣˊ 知識 ㄗㄣˊ 自私

However, the ㄖ is to be omitted from syllables which are neutral in tone. For example: wénzì 文字 (in which 字 is stressed), wénzǐ 蚊子 (子 is neutral).

Article 5. In printing, typewriting, and telegraphy, g, zh, ch, sh, ng, and l may be used as substitutes for q, ㄑ, ㄒ, ㄓ, ㄔ, ㄕ, and ㄖ, respectively, when type for the latter group of letters is not available.

Article 6. The following tone signs will be used when necessary to indicate tone:

- for yin-p'ing [high even tone], as in mā 媽
- for yang-p'ing [high rising tone], as in má 麻
- for shang-sheng [low rising tone], as in mǎ 馬
- for ch'u-sheng [high falling tone], as in mà 罵
- for ch'ing-sheng [neutral in tone], as in hǎo mǎ 好馬

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In printing and typewriting, when the tone sign cannot be placed conveniently over the vowel, it may be placed to the right of the syllable as a superscript. When the tones of all the syllables in a publication are to be indicated, the yang-p'ing tone sign may be omitted.

Article 7. When the combination of two syllables can be mistaken for one, they shall be separated by an apostrophe ('). For example: pi'au 皮襖 is distinguished from piau 漂 by using the apostrophe.

*Since no word in the Chinese language is represented by consonants alone, each Chinese character in this column represents its corresponding letter by virtue of its initial sound. Thus, 班, pronounced bo [po in the Wade system], represents b in the Chinese alphabet.

**[Each character in this column shows the actual pronunciation of the Chinese letter, or letter combination, which it represents but not necessarily the spelling according to the new phonetic system.]

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